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THE OLD ILLINOIS AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE.

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Morris Birkbeck, a prosperous farmer of England, emigrated to Illinois in 1817. He landed at the present site of Albion, then in White County in that year. Here he purchased fourteen hundred acres of prairie land. He immediately opened a farm and began country life as if he had always lived in the 'new west.' In conjunction with others he organized the Illinois Agricultural Society about 1821 or 1822. Mr. Birkbeck was president of the society in the latter year. Jonathan B. Turner was an enthusiastic successor of Mr. Birkbeck in the matter of scientific farming. Perhaps no man in the west has done more to advance the cause of scientific agriculture than has Jonathan B. Turner.

In 1833 there was held in Vandalia the first educational convention in the State, and from that date to 1855 there was a ceaseless effort to secure certain educational advantages for the youth of the State. Among those who were persistent in their efforts to advance the cause of education in the early days we may mention the Rev. John M. Peck, Prof. John Russell, Cyrus Edwards, John Goudy, Judge Sidney Breese, Thomas Mather, and a host of others. Governor Duncan as early as 1834 urged upon the Legislature the establishment of a State University, and in 1835 several charters were granted for the founding of colleges and seminaries.

There soon developed four lines along which the educational forces of the State seemed to exert themselves. Those were: First, a public free school system; second, a training school or normal school for the preparation of teachers; third, an agricultural college; and fourth, a State university. The normal school idea was agitated as early as 1840 by a paper published in Jacksonville. Agricultural papers were early published in the State. The *Prairie Farmer* was a power for good in the early '40s. In 1852 the Industrial League of Illinois was incorporated. This League issued an address to the people of the State in 1852 in which was pointed out the need of a State university that shall provide for departments of instruction, as follows: First, a Normal School Department;

second, a Department of Agriculture; third, a Department of Mechanics; fourth, a Department of Commerce and Business.

The Industrial League was very active in urging the consideration of at least two of these lines of education. A bill to incorporate the "Illinois University" with Jonathan B. Turner, Bronson Murray, John B. Kennicott, Uriel Mills, H. C. Johns, and William A. Pennell as trustees, was introduced into the General Assembly in 1855. The bill received a favorable consideration in the Senate, but the time was too short to get the bill through the House before adjournment, and the effort came to naught.

In all this agitation by the "Education Convention" and the "Industrial League," the literary phase of a State university was not very prominent. The method of support for these educational institutions was to use the college and seminary funds which had accumulated or might be realized from the sale of lands which had been donated by the general government for educational purposes.

In 1804 a land office was located in Kaskaskia. The Secretary of the Treasury of the United States was authorized to locate in the Kaskaskia land-office district a township of land to be given to the State of Illinois when admitted into the Union, for the purpose of founding a seminary of learning. In the Enabling Act of 1818 another township was given for the same purpose. This made 72 sections—46,080 acres. In 1829 the State Legislature authorized the sale of this college and seminary land, at the government prices, \$1.25 an acre. The total amount sold up to 1855 was 42,300 acres producing a fund of \$59,832. This money was borrowed by the State from time to time at an interest rate of six per cent. This money and some interest accumulations are now reported by the State Superintendent as a part of the permanent school fund.

There yet remained in 1861, 3,880 acres unsold—four and one-half sections of this college and seminary land. A portion of this remnant if not all of it was located in Iroquois County.

The effort of all the forces at work on the general school problem in Illinois resulted in the creation of the office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1854, and in the passage of the act creating the present free school system. In 1861 the General Assembly created by a charter the "Illinois Agricultural College." The enabling section reads as follows:

"Be it enacted by the people of the State of Illinois, represented in the General Assembly, That J. W. Singleton, Thomas Quick, Wm. A. Hacker, Walter Buchanan, B. C. Renois, Harmon Alexander, Curtis Blakeman, James H. Stipp and Zadoc Casey, and all such other persons

as may become associated with them, are hereby constituted a body corporate, by the name and style of the Illinois Agricultural College, for the purpose of instruction and science in practical and scientific agriculture, and in the mechanical arts."

The capital stock was fixed at \$50,000 with the privilege of increasing the sum to \$200,000, divided into shares of one hundred dollars each, ten per cent of the subscription to be paid in cash at time of issuing of stock. Arrangements in the charter provided for an opportunity for young men who were worthy and needy to have a chance to work in the fields a portion of each day and thus meet a portion of their expense.

Section 8 of the charter reads: "That the college and seminary lands of this State be and they are hereby donated to said corporation with power to lease, sell, dispose of and convey the same, and to receive and collect the money arising therefrom for the purpose of establishing, improving and carrying on said college and farm." The lands referred to in this 8th section of the charter were the remnant of the two townships granted by the general government in 1804 and 1818, for college and seminary purposes. There were four and one-half sections yet unsold. When the board of trustees of the "Illinois Agricultural College" was organized, it disposed of the four and a half sections for \$58,000 and the money was deposited with the treasurer of the college, Mr. A. D. Hay, a banker of Centralia.

When it came time for the trustees to locate the school, the activity of Mr. Thomas Quick the president of the board, secured the location of the college at the village of Irvington, the home of Mr. Quick, some five or six miles south of Centralia, on the line of the recently built Illinois Central railroad. Land was purchased for the farm, buildings were constructed, and a corps of instructors secured.

There was some doubt whether the "Illinois Agricultural College" was a State school or a private school. The 10th section of the charter seems to establish the fact that the school was a State institution. It reads: Said corporation shall make a full biennial report to the Legislature when in session of their financial condition, their progress, the number of pupils received and discharged, stating the residence of each."

The village of Irvington was a very small collection of houses, but the location was ideal as the lands were very rich and the situation very healthful.

Although the school was chartered in 1861, there had been much irritating delay in locating the school and in providing suitable buildings. However the school opened on the 10th of September, 1866, with the following faculty: Rev. I. S. Mahan, president; Rev. James S. C. Fin-

ley; Valentine C. Rucker; Mrs. Helen Keeney; Peter Walser, and Thomas Quick. The last named gentleman was the guiding genius in the board of trustees, and while the board had changed some since the charter was issued, Mr. Quick was still on the board and its president. Mr. Quick's position on the faculty was head of the department of law when that department should be organized.

Mr. Mahan remained but one year as head of the school, and upon the opening of the second year in September, 1867, the Rev. D. P. French was the president. In 1871 the Rev. Mr. French was succeeded by the Rev. A. C. Hileman who served till 1874, when the Rev. D. W. Phillips was selected as president. He served till the death of the school some three years later.

The charter of the school made no provision for requiring a bond of the treasurer covering the funds which might come into his hands. The subscription to the stock was liberal and with this money a farm of five hundred and sixty acres was purchased lying adjacent to the Illinois Central railroad, immediately west of the village of Irvington. The \$58,000 for which the college and seminary lands were sold was placed in the bank of Mr. Hay. This bank shortly afterwards failed, and the entire sum was lost. In later years the Legislature investigated the whole matter of the loss of this college and seminary fund, but no charges of intention to defraud could be proved against Mr. Hay. It was believed at the founding of the school that the income from the college and seminary fund together with tuition and the proceeds from the farm would be sufficient to sustain the school even if the Legislature should not make biennial appropriations for its maintenance. The Legislature never made an appropriation other than the gift of the college and seminary fund. But when the bank failed and the income from this fund was gone, the only source of support was the tuition and the proceeds from the farm. These were not sufficient to keep the college going. The deferred payments on the stock could not well be collected and the college found itself handicapped for want of means to keep the school running.

The certainty as to whether the college was a "State school" is further shown by the act of the General Assembly in 1869, two years after the school was regularly opened. It appears that the treasurer had failed to make any report to the Auditor of Public Accounts of the proceeds of the sale of the four and a half sections of the college and seminary lands. He had been repeatedly asked to do so. On April 19, 1869, the Legislature therefore passed an Act entitled, "An Act to secure the Endowment Fund of the Illinois Agricultural College." This provided

that unless the treasurer of the said college make a full and complete report to the Auditor of all money, notes, interest or other things of value, as the proceeds of the sale of the four and one-half sections of the college and seminary lands, within three months, then the Attorney General should take steps to secure the said amounts of money, etc.

Section 3 of this Act is as follows: "It shall be lawful in case of the establishment of the Southern Illinois Normal University, for the said college to transfer and make over to the trustees thereof the said trust fund, upon such terms and conditions as may be agreed upon between the trustees of said college and said university, and which shall be approved by the Governor, to be used only for purposes of endowment of said university." There was at that time a bill before the General Assembly for the establishing of a Normal School at some point south of the St. Louis and Terre Haute railroad, and it was the intention of the third section of the above bill to transfer any and all money which should be recovered from the defunct bank over to the proposed normal school.

At some date prior to 1878 the State entered suit against the trustees of the Illinois Agricultural College for the recovery of the college and seminary fund. In the April term, 1878, of the circuit court in Washington County, a decree was entered vesting the title to the college farm of 560 acres in the State, and on the 31st of May, 1879, the Legislature passed an Act authorizing the sale of the college farm. The Act provided that when the lands were sold the money should be turned into the State treasury and that all liens and incumbrances on the farm should be paid and that the residue should be applied to educational purposes as may hereafter be provided by law.

There were several claims against the farm amounting to several thousands of dollars. When the lands were sold and all claims were paid there remained the sum of \$9,000 which was turned in eventually to the Southern Illinois Normal University.

The school was well attended from the different parts of the State. As many as three hundred students were enrolled at one time, and the school seemed to have the air of prosperity about it. There was a preparatory department which accommodated those students whose training had been too limited to enable them to enter the regular college courses.

A large boarding hall and dormitory was erected. This was under the direct charge of the wife of Dr. French. The demand for accommodations for students was difficult to supply in a village of only three hundred people, and so a number of houses were erected to accommodate parents who wished to move to the school and remain while school was

in session. When the school year closed the farmers would move back to their farms and the village consisted of tenantless houses.

The unfortunate loss of the funds, and the decree of the court vesting the farm in the State were blows which the school could not recover from. The number of students gradually decreased. The teachers sought new fields, and the days of a once flourishing college were rapidly passing. A Mr. Clark, a Presbyterian minister occupied the college buildings and carried on a private school there for some years following the downfall of the college. The village lost its population, and for many years it was indeed a deserted village.

Within the past few years the main college building, a wooden building of considerable size, has been occupied by the Huddleston Orphans' Home, an institution under the auspices of the Baptist Church.